



Radical Ladies



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Declaration of Media Independence

Media Justice: Media for All the People

Media filled with stereotypical and demeaning imagery. Media that denies our basic humanity and renders us invisible. Media that promotes and justifies our oppression and murder. Too few outlets from which to tell our stories, to speak truth to power. The connections between media -- its form, content, and who owns it -- is inextricably tied to issues of social justice, power, and equity. From the criminalization of youth to the war in Iraq, the mainstream media has continued its historical role as a willing propaganda machine for corporate interests, and has blocked dialogue and debate on the publicly owned airwaves. Communication is a human right, yet our communities are denied this fundamental right every day. This will not change until we hold all institutions, public and private, to a higher standard of accountability, one that ensures that media serves the needs of all the people.

We hold this truth to be self-evident, that people of color are members of an ongoing continuum of struggle for fair and just media: from the indigenous and enslaved peoples who fought to speak in the shadow of genocide, to the historic fight to develop and sustain independent ethnic newspapers, to the courageous organizers who stood up for fair television coverage in the '60s, to the public access battles of the '70s, to the cyberspace and multimedia pioneers of the '80s and '90s, to the thousands who recently marched, protested, and sat-in to challenge increasing media concentration, people of color are the most critical indicator of how democratic media really is. Today, Media Justice organizers are working to build meaningful participation from communities of color and indigenous communities to claim the undeniable right to communicate -- to liberate our airwaves, networks, and cultural spaces. We aim to fundamentally change the ownership structure, language usage, and policy discourse around media within the United States and internationally, so that those communities most directly affected by media inequities can own the movement and bring into reality the vision behind Media Justice.

We also recognize the interconnectedness between our literacy as media producers/cultural workers, the fight for media accountability and just media policy, and the need for community-owned and controlled media institutions and networks. Therefore, we define the Media Justice

and policy, cultural workers and trainers of media production (film, video, radio, etc), media literacy, alternative journalism and virtual/real world technology organizing.

Every organization working on social justice issues realizes that the media is a huge part of the problem in our communities and recently there have been several disappointing "media convergence" events. Many of the traditional media organizing institutions have convened these strategy sessions and, surprise surprise, they have consistently not been strategic about what it would take to involve just a few people of color in panels and leadership circles. They have neglected to think about how to fundamentally change up the structure and language of discourse within each of these gatherings, so that our communities, who are directly affected, can own the movement and the vision behind this work.

Short of a revolution and a massive re-distribution of wealth, one of the events we are organizing with a collective of other media organizations and organizers of color is a Media Justice gathering and teaching session in Selma, Alabama late next year. Similar to Environmental Justice Movement, we felt that communities of color and indigenous communities needed to stake out a different space within and apart from the larger media democracy movement. We wanted to really be able to address the difference of focus and approach to our media organizing based on applying a rigorous race, class, and gender analysis to these issues. A gathering in Selma would frame our meeting in the context of one of the more visible movements for self-determination within this country and give a historicity and the needed political weight to draw community organizations into a dialogue around media issues. In this historic gathering we will educate each other on our issues, develop a core set of accessible principles around the Media Justice work, and invite both networks and base building community organizations to participate and widen the circle of those familiar and connected to media organizing.

It's ambitious, I know, but as group of headstrong young women, we were never ones to limit the vision of the world our communities wanted by the pesky reality of systemic oppression. In some ways, our gift has been the stubbornness to build institutions that don't reflect the system we are trying to break down but create the world and relationship we want now. I say that in a way that is harsh but sincere because I believe that if we can keep our values close, our imaginations open, and our stories fierce, We can and will win.

So we began to rebuild the matriarchy. We prioritized the leadership of young women of color as our trainers, as our organizers, and as tech support. When folks come to one of our trainings, one of the standard lines we hear is "Wow, I never have seen so many young women, let alone young women of color, know what they are doing around so many computers!" Yeah I say, and we even know how to program our own VCRs! It's funny how so simple a shift of who is teaching is not a simple thing at all. Because while it literally changes the face of who is training, the relationships built within this context are also different. And while this is not to repeat stereotypes, as an organization we are working towards modeling collective, intentional, nurturing models of leadership that move beyond gender binaries.

Finally I think as young women, we assert and recognize the leadership women have had for a long time in our communities that, from mother to daughter, nurtures the passing on of our stories, culture, and traditions. This is an extremely important role young women continue to play, and we believe it is vital to recontextualize our work as not only technology training but also spaces of our cultural resistance.

Another value we practice at TWM is co-teaching with a community teacher curriculum that comes from the community we are working with. There are two parts to why we follow this concept. First, technology curriculum at schools and educational institutions has caused an incredible trauma within our communities because the textbooks, the software, and the hardware are not built with the history and cultural context of our communities in mind. When you are setting up a training environment, you have to be really deliberate about what images, sounds, and effects are presented, because people are already expecting to be shut down. So, it is really important to have curriculum that comes from our communities' perspectives, that speaks to our own ideas, and the value systems that are embedded in the way we tell stories. Secondly because technical skill is privileged over other kinds of knowledge, we want to challenge folks and their understanding of what an expert could be. No matter what kind of training we offer, we always try to have a community teacher present, whose community wisdom is given equal weight to the "technical" knowledge of the other trainers present.

Media Justice: A Media for the People

Once we had our lab and our teaching methodology straight, our focus was to then figure out how to build meaningful participation from communities of color and indigenous communities within the realm of the media democracy movement. Lots of different folks define the work of the media democracy movement as so many different things, but at TWM we define the media democracy movement to include folks who are working on media accountability

movement to include those working in the areas of media advocacy, media accountability and policy, cultural work and training in media production, alternative journalism, and virtual/real world technology organizing.

Why Media Justice?

Media Justice speaks to the need to go beyond creating greater access to the same rotten corporate media structure. We are interested in more than paternalistic conceptualizations of "access," more than paper rights, more than taking up space in a crowded boxcar along the corporate information highway. Media Justice takes into account history, culture, privilege, and power. We seek new relationships to media and a new vision and reality for its ownership, control, access, and structure. We understand that this will require new policies, systems, and structures that will treat our airwaves and our communities as more than markets for exploitation.

We believe that communities of color, indigenous communities, and other oppressed and underrepresented communities need to stake out a distinct space within and apart from the media democracy/reform movement -- similar to the environmental justice movement's relationship to the mainstream environmental movement. We believe this is necessary in order to meaningfully address differences in focus and approach to media organizing. At the heart of our work is a rigorous power analysis, with race, class, and gender at the center. We are not content to have these issues relegated to one segment of a "mainstream" discussion. We need a unique space so that our communities can move forward the visions and strategies for this work that are grounded in their own reality, which we believe will lead our society towards a truly free and democratic media.

Media Justice is a powerful and necessary step toward liberating our institutions and building the world we want. Are you ready? Then let's get free.

Art McGee, Project Change
Thenmozhi Soundararajan, Third World Majority
Makani Themba-Nixon, The Praxis Project
Malkia Cyril, Youth Media Council
Jeff Perlstein, Media Alliance

Who is Media Justice?

Here is a sample of some of the Media Justice profiles and campaigns we are interested but not limited to. Add your community to this new his/herstory!

- FANNIE LOU HAMER speaking out against the injustices of voting discrimination in Mississippi for the first time on national networks, using song and chants as part of the vision for the civil rights movement.
 - VIDEO MACHETE's community-based media justice organizing in Chicago schools.
 - RIGOBERTA MENCHU TUM connecting the violence against indigenous people and the media blackout of their struggles and the American role in support of Central American dictatorships
 - COALITION OF IMMOKALEE WORKERS effective use of micro-radio for outreach and organizing to their farmworker membership in Florida.
 - YOUTH ORGANIZERS from Youth Organizing Communities and Inner City Struggle in Los Angeles using effective video documentation and strategic messaging to put pressure on the school board in Los Angeles to improve conditions in schools and win Ethnic studies.
 - MEDIA TANK's grassroots cable and wireless access campaigns in Philadelphia.
 - YOU self-publishing your zine, writing your songs and chants, throwing up your graf pieces, stickering and flyering your art, telling your stories and breaking through corporate media to tell it like it is.
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keep in mind who builds these computers. Whether it is in the Third World or in the U.S., it is mainly women and communities of color who are vulnerable to both the repressive labor practices and the unregulated toxic exposure in the high tech sweatshops of Hewlett Packard, Intel, Apple, and Microsoft. The computer designers and engineers, who design these fancy machines, are thinking more about the bottom line than about the ongoing human cost of the industry. While computers are promoted as a wave of new green industry, they are in fact quite stained with blood.

All of that said, the reason why TWM still does the work we do relates to our attitude about literacy and its relationship to liberation. Clearly, the way technology is set up now is fucked-up for our people and communities. However, the current evolution of the culture of personal computing will be with us for the next 50 to 60 years. This makes it a critical time for all of us to hack the hardware and the culture of this system and move the trajectory of our communities from compliant consumers to cultural and technical activists in every form of the media.

But what would this look like?

Rebuilding the Matriarchy: A TWM Methodology

We recognized first and foremost that since media spaces were places associated with past and current drama that we could not build a physical lab for people to enter. Creating a technology space and then expecting that to become a "community center" is a ridiculous concept. There is nothing inherently built into a computer that engenders community building (in fact it is exactly the opposite). So with our first seed grant we bought a seven-station portable laptop lab. With the laptops we could train in the spaces where communities already feel at home. We taught around the country in barns, churches, community centers, schools, and people's homes. With the technology portable and actually rather small, folks were able to focus on the cultural products they were translating and reshaping into a digital medium rather stress about the technology itself. It also prioritized for us the primacy of the community and the use of technology as tool and just a tool.

The other aspect of our teaching process that we needed to tackle was how to unpack the assumptions around the white boy's club of technology. As young women of color who had been early adopters of web and video technologies for our community movements, we had all faced being shut out of labs, being condescended to by other techies, and learning the tools on curriculum that were at best irrelevant and, at worst horribly offensive. We also realized that as working class young women of color in a racist, sexist, classist society, our leadership and vision for our communities is continually silenced (inside and outside of lab spaces).

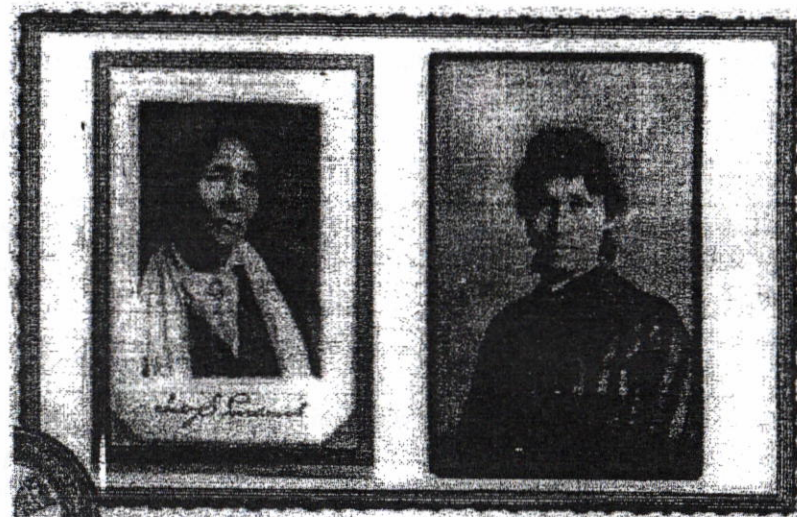
are good examples of the role mainstream media and news play in dividing our communities. We are criminals, crack whores, strippers, comic relief, terrorists, and other negative stereotypes that promote a deep powerlessness. Cultural critic Coco Fusco places these media representations — part of our ongoing betrayal by the camera in ethnography and anthropology — as the first line of colonial engagement with our peoples. This trauma is remembered by our peoples, even as it is reinforced today by the fact that almost every part of our lives is now under surveillance with video cameras.

We need to think about computers not as an inevitable product of progress, but as a specific technology embedded with the philosophy of the West's rugged individualism and colonialism. It is part of the legacy of consumerism where there is an expectation that people will use their technical devices in the privacy of their homes, alienating and separating themselves from other people. If you look at communities in the Global South, technology applications have been approached with a different perspective and the emphasis is on communal use, on ways that people share resources and maximize the productivity for the community's benefit.

This extends even to the color palettes and design motifs of the computer world. Last time I checked, Photoshop wasn't offering ghetto brick, mud walls, or third world stucco filters that I could use to represent the worlds my people live in now. And this reflects the lack of sensitivity the creators of software have in seeing different ways of seeing between cultures. But once again computers are a reflection of who can currently afford the machines and their particularly color- and culture-blind attitude that is particularly profound with the computer industry

This brings us to the problem of boys. When we are teaching technology, we in TWM are quite aware of the white boy cult that surrounds technology. Or more specifically, the white boy cult of technology. Our culture privileges the technical skills of boys at an early age, with so many "ins" to technology that girls are only beginning to have (think video games and Erector sets). And because of that boys, and later the alpha males of the dot com era, defined the culture and the language of technology that we have to work in. That is why so much of the language around computers is about domination and latently sexual (like plug-and-play, slave drives, master control, etc). It's also why so many of the representations in video games are beef-cakey heroes, big-busted women, and outdated stereotypes of people of color as athletes, terrorists, pimps, and dancers. In this boy culture, so much about how learning is transferred isn't collaborative. It is about one-upmanship and competition, never about true collaboration. It is a reflection of the arrogance of male privilege, of who has the time and money to keep up with all of the cool new gadgets, latest web sites, and hot software.

It is also important to remember how toxic computer manufacturing is, and to



LUCY ELDINE PARSONS (1853?-1942). Lucy E. Parsons, radical activist and prominent figure in the 1886 Chicago Haymarket riot, was born in Texas, probably in March 1853. Contemporary newspapers consistently identified her as a Negro; she claimed that her dark skin came from Mexican and Indian ancestors. She furnished a variety of Anglo and Spanish maiden names on different legal documents, but her true parentage is unknown, and she may have been born a slave. The circumstances of her early relationship with Albert R. Parsons^{qv} are also speculative. Despite Albert's claim that he first encountered Lucy on her uncle's ranch in Johnson County, they probably met during Reconstruction^{qv} in Waco, where Lucy was apparently well known and Albert worked for black suffrage and for a time edited a Radical Republican newspaper. Although no marriage record has ever been found, Albert and Lucy claimed to have been married in Austin in 1871, and they moved to Chicago together in 1873. After Albert was blacklisted as a printer for his role in the 1877 railroad strikes, the couple operated a dressmaking business at home. They had two children. Lucy and Albert Parsons became disillusioned with electoral politics and by 1883 began to call themselves anarchists. Both were outspoken atheists. They joined the International Working People's Association, which advocated the forcible overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a society based on the

exchange of goods among autonomous communes and trade unions. The IWPA advocated racial and sexual equality and secular education for both sexes, positions Lucy Parsons supported all her life. In October 1884 the IWPA began to publish the *Alarm*, edited by Albert Parsons. To this newspaper his wife contributed articles on child labor and lynchings of blacks. Her article "To Tramps, the Unemployed, Disinherited, and Miserable," in which she advised the poor to learn how to use explosives as weapons against the rich, was widely distributed as a flyer. By 1885 Lucy was a well-known radical speaker, and on April 28, 1885, she led a protest march on the newly opened Chicago Board of Trade.

On May 1, 1886, both Parsons led 80,000 people up Michigan Avenue in Chicago, inaugurating a general strike for the eight-hour day. Three days later seven policemen and several citizens were fatally wounded during a confrontation in Haymarket Square. Eight anarchists, among them Albert Parsons, were tried and convicted of conspiracy to murder, though the prosecution openly acknowledged that none of the defendants had thrown the bomb that had caused police to fire on the crowd. Lucy Parsons's "To Tramps" was submitted as evidence to demonstrate the alleged conspiracy. Seven of the eight were condemned to death. After the verdict, Lucy undertook an extensive speaking tour to arouse public opinion about the Chicago trial and to raise money for an appeal. She was closely watched by police and arrested and jailed in Columbus, Ohio. Despite her efforts and those of many well-known individuals, both in the United States and in Europe, Parsons and three of his companions were executed on November 11, 1887. Lucy Parsons believed that working class revolution would eliminate not only poverty but racial and sexual discrimination as well, and she devoted the remainder of her long life to the cause of revolutionary socialism. The Chicago police considered her "more dangerous than a thousand rioters" and broke up her meetings for thirty years after the Haymarket trial. She published books and pamphlets, traveled and lectured extensively, contributed to publications for social change, and published the newspapers *Freedom* (1892) and *The Liberator* (1905-06). She was a founding member of the Industrial Workers of the World and later was associated with the Communist Party, U.S.A. Lucy Parsons died in a fire in her home in Chicago on March 7, 1942. She was buried next to the Haymarket monument in Waldheim Cemetery outside Chicago.

Third World Majority: The media democracy movement
by Themmozi Soundarajan (from *Clamour* magazine, Issue 18, Jan/Feb 2003)
Third World Majority. Think about it.

Isn't it funny how a name can reframe the entire way the non-profit industrial complex defines the majority of people locked out from most of the world's resources? Are we your under-resourced and marginalized minority constituents, welfare mothers, juvenile delinquents, terrorists, maids, sex workers, drug addicts, illegal aliens, and sweatshop workers? Or are we our own visionaries, singers, poets, architects, filmmakers, organizers, scholars, and historians?

As the women of Third World Majority (TWM), we struggle with our vision and the definitions that can limit or free us. Within TWM, we are a collective of young women of color building a new media center. We partner with communities of color and indigenous communities to provide multimedia trainings and to develop strategies for how we can reclaim technology resources for our self-determination. We focus on the digital storytelling movement, in which communities create their own stories from the found material in their lives (art, oral history, creative writing, photographs, music, written script, letters, news clippings) and combine it with new media production (digital video, the Web, graphic design, sound engineering, animation) to tell their own truths in their own voices. In a lot of ways the work we do isn't just about telling stories, it's about reclaiming our histories.

From Museums to Ray Guns, Good Old Boys to Sweatshops: Where do we Fit in?

When we started TWM we had very few answers and many questions: Why do we feel uncomfortable around technology? Why is the culture of training and learning technology so inaccessible? Why are media labs, tech centers, and public access stations so often empty and not used by communities of color? Why are all the techies we know white alpha males with no social skills? And why is the damn media democracy movement so white? While these were some heavy questions, the first big step for our work with technology began by understanding its military and colonial legacy, the boy culture that supports this legacy, and the physical workforce who creates these technologies.

Whether it is the internet or the camera, all of the technologies that we work with have particular legacies of colonialism and military and police intervention. For example, the Internet, the original ARPANET, was a direct result of a scientific and military collaboration to develop a communications system for times of military crisis when it debuted in the 1970s. While part of this was related to Cold War concerns, it was also occurring in the backdrop of counter-intelligence and repression within many of the communities of color in the U.S. Film and video

The work of independent media is to tell the history of social struggle in the world, and here in North America-- the US, Canada and Mexico, independent media has, on occasion, been able to open spaces even within the mass media monopolies: to force them to acknowledge news of other social movements.

The problem is not only to know what is occurring in the world, but to understand it and to derive lessons from it-- just as if we were studying history-- a history not of the past, but a history of what is happening at any given moment in whatever part of the world. This is the way to learn who we are, what it is we want, who we can be and what we can do or not do.

By not having to answer to the monster media monopolies, the independent media has a life work, a political project and purpose: to let the truth be known. This is more and more important in the globalization process. This truth becomes a knot of resistance against the lie. It is our only possibility to save the truth, to maintain it, and distribute it, little by little, just as the books were saved in Fahrenheit 451--in which a group of people dedicated themselves to memorize books, to save them from being destroyed, so that the ideas would not be lost.

This same way, independent media tries to save history: the present history-- saving it and trying to share it, so it will not disappear, moreover to distribute it to other places, so that this history is not limited to one country, to one region, to one city or social group. It is necessary not only for independent voices to exchange information and to broaden the channels, but to resist the spreading lies of the monopolies. The truth that we build in our groups, our cities, our regions, our countries, will reach full potential if we join with other truths and realize that what is occurring in other parts of the world also is part of human history.

In August 1996, we called for the creation of a network of independent media, a network of information. We mean a network to resist the power of the lie that sells us this war that we call the Fourth World War. We need this network not only as a tool for our social movements, but for our lives: this is a project of life, of humanity, humanity which has a right to critical and truthful information.

We greet all of you, recognizing the work you have done so that the struggle of indigenous people is known, and that other struggles are known, so that the great events of this world are seen in a critical form. We hope your meeting is a success and that it results in concrete plans for this network, these exchanges, this mutual support that should exist between cultural workers and independent media makers. We hope that one day we can personally attend your meeting, or perhaps that one day you can have your conference in our territory, so we can listen to your words and you can hear ours in person. For now, well, we take advantage of the help of the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico (NCDMUSA) to use this video to send a greeting. This section in English: I don't know if my English is OK but good luck and so long. Cut.



Sheri Herndon

Sheri Herndon is a media activist with 12 years experience producing media and educating people about the power of radical and independent media to promote social change. She was News Director KCMU Public Radio in Seattle for four years where she developed a news program that became one of

Seattle's most progressive and vibrant activist information sources. As a cofounder of the Independent Media Center in 1999, she focuses on developing the global Indymedia network and promoting more democratic forms of communication, as well as increasing access to appropriate information technology in disenfranchised communities.

Recently, she has spoken on the vital links between self-determination, cultural expression, and communication models that create and sustain public spaces for dialogue, understanding, and the practice of true democracy. As a radical media strategist and network developer, she currently works to preserve open spaces on the airwaves, the Net and in the community, and to promote the network form of organizing.

Sheri previously worked in the corporate legal world and is pursuing a Ph.D in Comparative Literature. She is on the board of several media oriented nonprofits, including Earth On-the-Air Independent Media (EOAIM), and is a cofounder of the Seattle Independent Media Coalition (SIMC) and Community Powered Radio (CPR).

Sheri is interested in developing the Indymedia organizational model on both the social and digital network levels. Two years ago there was only one IMC: today the network has grown to 80 sites in over 17 countries. Indymedia is truly one of the most interesting international decentralized networks in existence and promises to provide an abundant and fertile ground for democratic decision-making models on the global level.



DeeDee Halleck is a media activist and co-founder of Paper Tiger Television and the Deep Dish Satellite Network, the first grass roots community television network. She is Professor Emerita in the Department of Communication at the University of California at San Diego. Her first film, *Children Make Movies* (1961), was about a film-making project at the Lillian Wald Settlement in Lower Manhattan. Her film, *Mural on Our Street* was nominated for Academy Award in 1965. She has led media workshops with elementary school children, reform school youth and migrant farmers.

In 1976 she was co-director of the Child-Made Film Symposium, which was a fifteen year assessment of media by youth throughout the world. As President of the Association of Independent Video and Film Makers (AIVF) in the seventies, she led a media reform campaign in Washington, testifying twice before the House Sub-Committee on Telecommunication. She has served as a trustee of the American Film Institute, Women Make Movies and the Instructional Telecommunications Foundation. She has authored numerous articles in *Film Library Quarterly*, *Film Culture*, *High Performance*, *The Independent*, *Leonardo*, *Afterimage* and other media journals. Her book, *Hand Held Visions: the Impossible Possibilities of Community Media* is published by Fordham University Press. She recently co-edited a book for M.E. Sharpe, publishers, entitled *Public Broadcasting and the Public Interest*.

Halleck has been closely involved with the Independent Media Center movement. In 2001 she developed a television version of Democracy Now!, the Pacifica Network daily radio news series, which is now being shown daily in over 100 community cable channels and on the Dish Network to a total potential audience of 12 million viewers.

www.deepdishtv.org

www.papertiger.org

www.indymedia.org

Statement of Subcomandante Marcos to the Freeing the Media Teach-In organized by the Learning Alliance, Paper Tiger TV, and FAIR in cooperation with the Media & Democracy Congress, Jan.31/Feb.1 1997, NYC

We're in the mountains of Southeast Mexico in the Lacandon Jungle of Chiapas and we want to use this medium with the help of the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, to send a greeting to the Free the Media Conference that is taking place in New York, where there are brothers and sisters of independent communication media from the US and Canada.

At the Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism we said: A global decomposition is taking place, we call it the Fourth World War--neoliberalism: the global economic process to eliminate that multitude of people who are not useful to the powerful--the groups called "minorities" in the mathematics of power, but who happen to be the majority population in the world. We find ourselves in a world system of globalization willing to sacrifice millions of human beings.

The giant communication media: the great monsters of the television industry, the communication satellites, magazines, and newspapers seem determined to present a virtual world, created in the image of what the globalization process requires.

In this sense, the world of contemporary news is a world that exists for the VIPs--the very important people. Their everyday lives are what is important: if they get married, if they divorce, if they eat, what clothes they wear and what clothes they take off--these major movie stars and big politicians. But common people only appear for a moment--when they kill someone, or when they die. For the communication giants and the neoliberal powers, the others, the excluded, only exist when they are dead, or when they are in jail or court. This can't go on. Sooner or later this virtual world clashes with the real world. And that is actually happening: this clash produces results of rebellion and war throughout the entire world, or what is left of the world to even have war.

We have a choice: we can have a cynical attitude in the face of the media, to say that nothing can be done about the dollar power that creates itself in images, words, digital communication, and computer systems that invades not just with an invasion of power, but with a way of seeing that world, of how they think the world should look. We could say, well, "that's the way it is" and do nothing. Or we can simply assume incredulity: we can say that any communication by the media monopolies is a total lie. We can ignore it and go about our lives.

But there is a third option that is neither conformity, nor skepticism, nor distrust: that is to construct a different way--to show the world what is really happening--to have a critical world view and to become interested in the truth of what happens to the people who inhabit every corner of this world.